unless they are willing to pay a small ransom. When a new bride arrives in her new community, she is arrested at the village limits and, before being admitted, she must take an oath whereby she formally abjures her old allegiance and swears to uphold the local customs of her new community. 609 [585]

The primary source of prestige among the peasants themselves (not considering village priests, teachers, etc.) is wealth. Nevertheless, individual skill and achievement also add considerably to one's position. Besides strength, special skills and industriousness, a person's oratorical talent increases his prestige surprisingly. It has often been observed that the skill of public speaking, "knowing the tongue of the people," has raised poorer peasants to important positions on the local level. 554

Racial minorities are practically non-existent in Hungary. There is, however, a rather sharp line drawn between Christians and Jews. (The latter tend to congregate in big cities but can be encountered in the villages also.) Authors with democratic and liberal backgrounds often ignore this important phenomenon either on account of a sense of shame or simply because there has never been a reliable and objective study of Magyar public opinion on this point. 563

Besides the simple needs of life, preservation of the self 556
and the race, another motive of the Magyar folk customs is stressed by some authors: the urge to assert oneself in the society. Since wealth is the main source of respect in Magyar society, certain conventional outward signs of wealth (such as the year and make of the family car in the United States) are emphasized by many people, even to the extent that they far exceed their means in order to keep up appearances. Such outward signs of wealth are the furniture of the main living room, especially the elaborateness of the decorated bed, and the holiday attire. People who wear rags for six days of the week, may don on the seventh hand embroidered pieces of clothing whose value may exceed several months' income. Weddings are social 585 574 556
events that usually require far greater financial sacrifice than one might call reasonable. In small villages, all the inhabitants are invited, without exception, or in towns, the entire street is invited. On such occasions the peasant, who usually economizes on his food to keep his animals in better condition, slaughters, without regret, pigs, sheep, calves and even beef cattle, not to speak of dozens of fowl--all for the wedding feast. Pastry, usually a Sunday treat on the farm, is served in a wide variety and abundance.

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Magic and superstitions beliefs even today permeate the everyday lives of the Magyar peasants, and they have remained long after other aspects of their life have changed. They will go when urban culture and enlightenment have been adopted completely, but this is still for the future to demonstrate. It is reported that today the peasants who drive the tractors on the kolkhozes will not begin work without a little magical ritual which they learned from their fathers and which aims at assuring them a better crop.

Historically, the most important elements in Magyar folk customs are those which have their roots in primitive dramatic [585] performances and rites inspired by magical beliefs. These customs are full of dramatic symbolism as in the case of the bride who, when entering her husband's house for the first time, is seated and [844] a curly-haired baby is put in her lap. Women in difficult labor are prescribed per analogiam a walk around the trough. Some of these customs involve beating people, noise-making, feasts, competitions, fights and jumps deriving from ritual dances; e.g. in some communities the herdsmen have to pick up their yearly pay from the ground standing and jumping on one foot: this is supposed to

entertained by his elder comrades. No women are permitted to wit- 884
ness this event. After this recognition the young man is free to
court the local girls and participate in the events reserved for
grown men.

Before her marriage, the Magyar girl customarily lives chastely, 831
and her virginity is believed to give her magic powers which are em-
ployed in several superstitious practices. Many customs and especial- 593
ly the terminology connected with marriage go back to the period
of Magyar life when rape or bride-purchase was common. The girl of
marriageable age is still today referred to as the 'girl for sale'
(eladó lány), and the root vesz 'to take, to buy' also denotes 'to
marry.' Among the marriage customs, the church or the civil wedding 585
is only part of the entire ceremonial. The most significant popular
ceremony features the solemn knotting of the bride's hair and the
placing of the főkötő, the shawl covering the head, by the women of
the family she is about to enter. The marriage ceremonies, of course,
feature the wedding feast with village-wide rejoicing. The ceremonial
slaughter of domestic animals (a cockerel with the Palóc) for this
feast is reminiscent of former animal sacrifices.

The mother delivers her child lying either in bed or, in some 000

nowadays, are often prohibited by the local Communist authorities or simply limited to the square around the church or even to the interior of the church. 795 [796]

The Protestants, besides worshipping on Sunday in their church, often gather in their homes in the evenings and read the Bible, sing hymns, and tell pious stories. [771] Hungarian folklore is rich in legends and tales of which a common subject are the wanderings of Christ among the peoples in the company of Saint Peter. [538]

The celebration of the Catholic parish feast is an occasion for joyous festivities in which the non-Catholic inhabitants also take part. [796]

Intermarriages between Catholics and Protestants are frequent in spite of the restrictions imposed by the Catholic Church which require a reversalis, a document in which the non-Catholic party agrees that children issuing from the marriage shall be brought up in the Catholic faith. [585]

Although there are no permanent sects in Hungary that preach healing by faith, men and women who claim to have charismatic virtue and to heal through laying on of hands and prayer arise occasionally among the peasants and acquire a local and short-lived renown. They are called javasember or javasassony. 756

With the 1945 land reform and later decrees, the Catholic Church has lost its large estates and even the land owned by local parishes were partly 659 793

584 night he slinks home, so that if possible no one shall see him. To be seen would also be a disgrace. He gets two plates as well, on one there is a fattened duck, a stuffed chicken, a tart, cigarettes, apples, nuts and gingerbread; on the other old fashioned sweets. The lad carries the apron, a relation of the girl's the plates. On top of all this the lad also gets 40 to 50 pengő: that is the «apron money». He even gets a rosemary covered with gold dust as a bridegroom's bouquet. This usually happens on a Saturday. Next day he goes to church in his new apron and with the bridegroom's bouquet in his hat. Everyone can see what he is up to... Yet he will not even tell the name of his fiancée, in vain do his friends bombard him with questions... He does not even glance at his bride... Even that would be a disgrace... But in the afternoon he has a bachelor party, paying for the drinks with the «apron money» and in the evening the newly fledged bridegroom takes his bachelor friends to see his fiancée; and she offers the guests apples and nuts.

585 The engagement lasts one or two months. In olden times the wedding lasted about three weeks, now-a-days it is all over in a day. The whole «lot», that is to say the whole clan, is invited to the wedding. Three carts usually take the bride's trousseau; if she is poor, one cart is sufficient. A well to-do girl gets besides the furniture 18 pillows, nine with linen and nine with silk covers, three mattresses, one cider down, five richly embroidered sheets, three bed covers, thirty shirts, twenty-seven «testalló»-s (peculiar kind of blouses), 12 silk kerchiefs, 12 scarves, 18 skirts, 9 ordinary and 7 grand aprons, 4 frilled petticoats, 15 warm scarves and one dress for baking bread. This is her due from her parents. In old times she got from her fiancé a pair of red boots, now she gets a pair of shoes instead, a silken kerchief and a wedding

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•585 ring at the marriage ceremony. Every member of the clan is asked to the wedding. There are no «professional» best men and witnesses as in some places in Hungary; these offices are distributed amongst the relations; and for this reason Matyó weddings are not so burdened with poetry invented for the occasion as other weddings are.

In the morning the bridegroom's carts go to fetch the «bed» which means the whole trousseau. This name is by no means meant to suggest that the bed plays an important part in a Matyó wedding. That would be a really serious disgrace in Matyó eyes! In the meantime the «bouquet girls» arrive at the bridegroom's house, bringing the bridegroom's marriage shirt and bouquet. They are the envoys of the bride. Their number is the same as that of the Muses: there are nine of them. Each holds a plate in her hand and on the plate are five or six bunches of rosemary. The bridegroom's mother takes over the flowers and the bridegroom then distributes them amongst the lads. He sticks one in his hat and so do the others. The band, near at hand, starts playing, and the lads dance a few turns with the bouquet girls, giving their rosemaries a little shake... The girls have brought two bridegroom shirts, one for the marriage ceremony, the other for the wedding entertainment. Both the bridegroom and the bride must say farewell to their parents house. Everybody cries profusely, especially at the bride's house. If the bride does not cry bitterly, that is another disgrace... They cry and wail as though they were taking leave of the dead!

The bride's wedding guests are at her house, those of the bridegroom are at his. The bridegroom sends to fetch the bride: his best man, his two witnesses, two «brides women», two bridesmaids... They bring the engagement scarf, shoes and kerchief. The party are offered chicken made up with sweet pepper... The men eat it,

●585 but for the women to have more than a bite would be yet another disgrace; they just taste the spicy dish. Then they start bargaining at great length for the bride, who cannot be taken away as simply as all that. She has to be bought! According to the Hungarian saying the girl is «for sale» and the original meaning of «vőlegény» — the Hungarian for bridegroom — is «buying man». After long arguments it seems as though the deal were not going to succeed and the bridegroom's envoys get up, according to ancient custom, to start on their way back... Of course they then speedily reach an agreement, as the whole quarrel is merely a picturesque custom, designed to show that a girl should not rush into marriage... The fictitious price is now-a-days about 50 pengő... The bride, who led the negociations, then allows the «bed» to be loaded on to the cart. The cart which carries the «bed», the horses, and even the harness are adorned with flowers, sometimes they tie cracknels into the bridle.

When they make the «bed» on the cart, some one throws a broken pot against the cart wheel with the wish: «may this married couple part when this broken potsherd grows together». They do not drive straight to their destination with the loaded cart; it is customary to make a wide détour through the village, so that every one shall see the trousseau. Little bells tied to the harness attract attention from street to street.

Then follows the dressing of the bride, her final fare well, when she has to kiss everybody and everyone kisses her. The «wedding queen» is shaken by loud sobs... Not to cry would be very unseemly! When the church ceremony of marriage has been celebrated and the party reaches the bridegroom's house, the bride's mother-in-law receives her with sugar: — «God brought you to us! May your life be as sweet as this sugar!» — and handing

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585 the bride the sweet, she leads her into the house by the hand. Dancing follows at once... Then both the bride and the bridegroom change at the house of some neighbour. Then another dance and the bride changes her clothes again. Each time the band starts a new dance, the bride changes her clothes... Only those invited may take part in the dance, but outside the gate stands a whole crowd of beautifully dressed marriegeable girls, who have not been invited, but hope to get in. If one of the lads, who has been invited, signs to one of the girls, — a mere wink is sufficient — she goes in and takes part in the dance...

In the evening, after a series of ceremonial customs have been performed, comes the banquet. To this the whole household of the bride's family, which in Hungarian is called «hérész», is also asked. They come along provided with all kinds of good things, with sweets and the inevitable symbolic nuts and apples. Last of all walks the bride's mother, who brings a stuffed chicken and a bottle of very sweet wine. The bridegroom with his best man and the bride with her brides-maids, all holding burning candles in their hands, receive the «hérész» on the porch. All the good food they bring is put into the loft, — the place designated for the wedding night.

[262] This is the menu of the banquet: noodle soup with chicken and beef, after that cabbage with mutton or pork, after that some milky dish and lastly some kind of sausage. Of course there is plenty of wine. Appetites are excellent and spirits rise. Everyone eats freely, only the bride and the bridegroom are not allowed to touch anything. It would be a great disgrace to eat, although, poor things, they are already faint with hunger...

After the supper the new couple and the «bride's women» and brides-maids, who have been waiting at table,

585 go up into the loft, and now it is their turn to eat the food brought by the «hérész» — of course with the exception of the bride, for whom to confess hunger would be a great disgrace! After much persuasion she eats perhaps one nut... (We explain the meaning of nuts in the chapter «The fire of Saint Ivan».)

After midnight the «hérész» goes home and the bridegroom's guests stay behind. The bride and bridegroom go with the «hérész» and at her parent's house the bride's hair is put up. The best man brings out the bride, the bridegroom accepts her and kisses her. The gipsy band begins to play, and the party to dance... About 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning the famous «red pepper» chicken stew is served, and after that comes the bride's dance. Only those who pay for the honour may dance with the bride and pay they all do! The money thus collected belongs to the bride. At dawn the bride and the bridegroom go back to his house, as the guests have also dispersed. If it is still dark, they go up to the loft, lie down in their clothes and wait for the morning... There is an invisible barrier between them... The bride sleeps sometimes for a whole week in the loft, with the — sisters of her lawful husband...

Now the bride should make friends with her new home and her husband, but that is a very difficult matter. She will not eat before her husband... She is ashamed... After dinner she runs home to her mother, stays with her until the evening and has dinner and supper with her.

In a Matyó house there is a room on the right and another on the left of the porch. In one of these no fire is ever laid, not even in the greatest cold. This is the bedroom of the new woman. At night there is no one in the porch, the old people sleep in the other room and the new husband sleeps in the stables of one of his neigh-

[See Cat. 116, p 94 -- Analyst]

585 bours. One must know that the Matyó stable, as they call
[29] it the «sty», is the meeting place and living room of the men. There is even a fireplace in it. It is as it were a club house of primitive people. They collect there to talk, to smoke, to fry bacon. If the new wife is in love with her husband, she soon opens the door to him when he slinks home about midnight . . . But sometimes he may have to wait for a whole month. And they have to be extremely careful, lest the old people should notice something. This is taken very seriously, and next morning the young couple, and especially the new husband have something to listen
[76] to . . . To give some sign of love before others is a grave disgrace. Sooner or later however some event will occur, and presumably the old people also know that a baby is not brought by the stork, nor does it grow on a rose-bush, as the ladies-in-waiting of the Whitsun queen say in their songs . . . But all this is in vain, laws are laws, and the Matyó laws are particularly strict. This strictness is the cause of all those possible «disgraces» which may befall the young couple, during the wedding celebrations, if they do not take utmost care.

Wedding customs

(A little history is mingled with this chapter)

585 The most frequent word used in connection with a
574 Hungarian wedding is the word «lakodalom» meaning banquet, that is feasting, carousing; the marriage is celebrated, the wedding takes place, but the «lakodalom» is eaten and enjoyed! The Hungarian saying: «a 'lakodalom' in the hills and in the valleys» means an entertainment which is gay, well fed and endless. Food, drink,

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585 574 music, toasts, anecdotes, these are its ingredients. When enough has been eaten, the effects of wine are dissipated in songs and shaken off with dancing. But it is still better if high spirits couple the two. Soon they had a slogan :

Host, have your house swept,
Have that long table carried out
And all the dishes and plates,
For dancing there shall be plenty of space !

535 Space alone is not sufficient for Hungarian dancing, it requires a great many more things. Hungarian wine is also important, and it certainly played an important part in teaching Hungarians to dance. This is what an old poem says :

We have had a good wine harvest,
It will give us full strength
And a great wish for dancing !

But even wine is not sufficient for Hungarian dancing, it takes other things as well. These essentials were enumerated very long ago by a Hungarian nun, who lived before the battle of Mohács (1526). According to her the following are the essentials for dancing : «the space shall be beautiful, wide, light and peaceful ; there shall be an abundance of food and strong liquor, the bodies of the dancers shall be beautiful, light, elegant and strong».

Naturally music is also wanted, and for some old Hungarian dances singing as well. Even in Heaven one cannot imagine — for instance — the «kállai kettős» (a renowned old Hungarian dance) danced otherwise than it is done down here, as without its peculiar music and songs it is no dance at all. «I wonder whether they dance in Heaven» enquires the Hungarian nun in her beautifully

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written Hungarian treatise compiled not long after the discovery of America. And «what kind of sound will there be while we dance? Will there be violonists, lute players, drummers, «cimbalom» players? Yes, there will be» — she anwers with conviction, — «songs are also sung while dancing».

The German author of the «Ungarischer oder Dazianischer Simplizissimus» writes about the Hungarians in 1683, in his 19th chapter: «Practically all their dances are ballets; they dance very gracefully and neatly, not like the Germans or the French, who think such a lot about their own steps». The German artist August Ellrich, writes in his book «Die Ungarn wie sie sind» in 1830, that while dancing the Hungarians sway so beautifully, that compared to them the Fandango of the Spaniards, the Saltarella of the Neapolitans, the Mazurka of the Poles, the Waltz of the Germans and the Minuet of the French are merely grotesque convulsions. All these are a long exhibition of clumsiness, there is only one real dance, and that is the Hungarian dance. It is the perfection of grace and charm. The Hungarian dance is a bewitching marvel. «A man» — he writes, — «who has seen a woman in her Hungarian costume dance a Hungarian dance really well, and can still quickly and correctly answer the question «what is twice two?» is a man, whom I, if I were a girl, would scorn as a lover!»

But for this dance it is very necessary that besides Hungarian high spirits and Hungarian wine the «bodies performing shall be beautiful, light, elegant and strong». If a wedding lasted one or two weeks, — which in olden days was no rare event, — it afforded a great many opportunities for dancing. And many were provided already before the wedding; there was a dance for wooing a girl, for courting her, one for getting engaged and exchanging rings,

535 one for the vigil (when they wept over the bride) for the
585 reception of the bride's envoys and her best men; one
574 for the wedding banquet; one at the girl's home, at the first visit of the girl's parents to their married daughter; one when the young woman is taken to church after her first baby. The young, the old and the guests had their own dances and what is more, the invited and the uninvited guests had separate dances. During the marriage ceremony there was the priest's dance, before that the kitchen dance, the scarf dance and the present dance; the dawn-fire dance or singeing of the bride, and in some parts of the country many other dances as well. But all these varied not so much in choreography, as in mood, because the Hungarian dances offer an almost unlimited opportunity for improvisation, subject to moods and individual fancies. The bride's dance was always slow (an old poem advises the bridegroom also to be restrained in his movements). All the wilder was the dance of the uninvited guests, who had to be satisfied with one or two songs; in these the whole village, any member of it, could take part without being invited; and they did take part indeed, insisting on their right to do so.

535 The singeing of the bride occurs on the second day
585 of the wedding. It is a ceremonious dance; they dance around a fire lit in the courtyard, and the bride even jumps over it, in order to free herself of all evils, as in the fire jump of Midsummernight. At weddings the mice dance, the candle dance and the pillow dance were often performed. These were playful dances, they usually had their own tunes and songs. The pillow dance was performed to this song:

In a lonely mill
There is an oak beam,
A little owl lady
Walked sprucely along it.

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The centre of the wedding dances is the bride's dance: as we saw at the Matyó wedding, it must be paid for.

Payment for the bride, and a whole lot of other wedding customs, almost all of them in fact, have their explanation in the two ancient forms of acquiring women: kidnapping them and buying them. Tho this day the Hungarian wedding customs preserve many fragments and symbols of these ancient ways. Hunor and Magor, that is Magyar, the founders of the two sister nations, the Huns and the Hungarians, still kidnap their women according to the legend of the golden stag. Our laws of the 11th century vigorously forbid the kidnapping of women, and threaten the kidnappers. Later on, in a certain transition period, the punishment of girl kidnappers was not taken too seriously. The 13th century penal code of the Hungarian town of Selmecbánya prescribes that a kidnapper shall be punished only it the girl feels no affection for him. At the time of the conquest of Hungary — over a thousand years ago — the purchase of women was more customary at least amongst the more distinguished people. The Hungarian language still calls a marriageable girl a «girl for sale» and the literal translation of «vőlegény», the Hungarian for bridegroom, is «buying man». The purchase price of a woman was as much as her were-geld in case she was kidnapped; the highest price was a hundred bullocks. Amongst the ancient Hindus the were-geld was a hundred cows, amongst the ancient Arabs a hundred camels, amongst the ancient Greeks a hundred oxen: hekatombé. At that time the girl's dowry consisted of valuable furs: it was on account of these that she was sometimes called Neste or Nyusz, the former meaning marten, the latter sable. The two daughters of Leader Gyula, who occupied Transylvania, were called Karoldu and Saroldu, that is black and white weasel. But the Hungarian word «hölgy», which means

[1. See cat. 116, p. 110 — Analyst]

581 «young lady», in olden days meant also weasel, and the [825] Hungarian word for ermine is «hölgy»-weasel. The people call the weasel «lady weasel» whether it be a «he» or a «she». In consequence of some atavistic survival it is considered a «she» to such an extent, that if a weasel, that is a «lady» weasel gets busy round the hen-coop a little hemp ball is placed in it, so that when «she» comes, she shall see her accustomed feminine implement and spin rather than harm a fellow woman! An even better proof is the fact that a whole series of Hungarian words, all connected with marriage, have become common everyday words on the basis of the word «menyét» i. e. weasel. Such are meny, meaning daughter-in-law; menyekző: marriage; menyasszony: 585 bride; menyecske: young woman. Innumerable symbolic 581 memories of the purchase of women are still alive in Hungarian weddings. They attempt to kidnap, or for fun even actually kidnap, the bride; they besiege her house, all kinds of obstacles are placed before the wedding procession, even shots are fired. The best men have to do all sorts of difficult things and they also have to solve riddles. — On the other hand, several things have to be paid for to this day: entrance into the house where the wedding takes place, for fetching the bride's belongings, for dancing with the bride; moreover women who help in the kitchen have to be paid, and so on.

585 In certain districts of Hungary the cock plays a great part in a wedding. A cock is led at the head of the wedding procession, or the bridegroom carries one in his hand; or cocks are made of sugar or sweets. — In other parts jugglers enliven the wedding by performing funny tricks invented for the occasion, in a few places we find beautiful pageants.

One of the most important events in a wedding is taking off the wreath, it is the symbolic ceremony through

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585 which the girl becomes a woman. Taking off the wreath is usually the task of the best man. Sometimes the best man sticks the wreath onto his stick, sometimes it is hung onto a pitch fork and sometimes is carried back amidst the wedding party stuck onto a sword. All these are the remnants of extremely ancient customs. In the 17th century, at Transylvanian aristocratic weddings, the wreath was cut off the bride's head as a memento that «she shall thus behave herself in holy wedlock, that if she besoils it, a sword will fall onto her head.» But this Hungarian custom existed already in the 13th century. The son of the Hungarian king Béla IV. in 1264 also cut the wreath off the head of his bride, Kunigund, with a sword, according to the words of a German chronicler — juxta ritum suae gentis — according to the custom of his own nation. One may judge from all this the antiquity and the importance of popular custom from the point of view of cultural history.

The gathering of the grapes

521 245 This is the last of the great outdoor tasks which have to be done in autumn. In time it is the last, in the way of amusement and gaiety it is the first. No wonder, as it means collecting, sorting and pressing the universal medicine of all Hungarian sadness. It is a lasting joy to the farmer if he presses a great quantity of nectar in his cellar and it is at least one gay day of oblivion for the poor people who, «sic vos non vobis», collect for others and press for others : but on this occasion they can also drink plentifully — themselves. Gathering the grapes without gaiety and

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the bride and groom. During the handshake or immediately after, the boy hands to the girl a gold or a polished silver coin often stuck into a red apple, and therewith the "buy", that is, the engagement, is concluded. The girl reciprocates with a finely embroidered handkerchief, the "token kerchief", and a tiny bouquet called the "engagement bouquet" to be worn by the boy on his hat until the day of the wedding. The best man then blesses the engaged couple and expresses his opinion that the boy should be entitled hereafter to call freely to see his fiancée. Then all present drink to the happy outcome of the engagement; this is called the "blessing of the deal", after which the groom and his best man take leave, but not before the girl has presented her fiancé with a silver coin and the best man with a kerchief or scarf offered on a plate. During the engagement the groom is allowed to visit his fiancée regularly, and custom demands that he should call at least once a day. During this time the girl sews and embroiders the splendid engagement shirt that the boy will wear on the day of their wedding. The shirt is made of material spun and woven by the bride herself.

On the Sunday before the wedding-day the selection of assistants, best man, and bridesmaids takes place. In some parts the best man and the witnesses are chosen outside the family because of their clever versification, which stands them in good stead at every turn, their glib-tongued wit, and their popularity; in others they are regularly chosen from within the family, as are usually all the bridesmaids.

The marriage itself takes place usually on a Wednesday, a day, according to popular belief, well suited for a happy start. The invitations to the wedding and to the ensuing banquet are effected with the aid of a number of special assistants. These "inviters", dressed in their

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585 Sunday best, their hats decorated with flowers and ribbons, make three consecutive calls in the afternoon of the last three days before the wedding. All who have been invited call on the day preceding the wedding at the bridegroom's house to offer their wedding-presents: useful articles, decorations for the wedding-table, and choice foodstuffs and wines which will be placed upon a plate before their seat at the banqueting-table and which, once the banquet is started, will be offered round to the guests.

The meat that will go into the delicious dishes of the banquet, unbelievable quantities of poultry, a whole ox, calf, lamb, and pig, is also prepared on the eve of the wedding-day. The dressing of meat is followed by a merry "slaughtering-banquet".

On the day of the wedding the soups, dishes of meat, and cakes are prepared in the courtyard on big open fireplaces, while the wedding-cake, an enormous cake with fancy decorations, is baking in the tiled-oven of the farm, which has to be taken to pieces before the cake can be lifted out and placed upon its beribboned pedestal. In front of the houses of the engaged couple young saplings are erected by their friends. On the boy's trees farming-implements, and on the girl's trees cooking utensils, are hung along with coloured ribbons, kerchiefs and scarves.

The "bride's bed", that is, her trousseau and bedding piled high upon a bed, is taken to the groom's house in an open carriage and over the longest possible route, so that the greatest number of people can see and admire it. Once the carriage is on its way, drawn by beribboned horses of the groom amid the jingling of silver bells attached to their necks, some friend will smash an earthen pot against one of the wheels while everybody around

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585 will shout his wish that the couple shall part no sooner than the fragments have become a new pot again... Often the pillows of the bride are taken to the boy's house in a colourful marching-dance, called the "pillow-dance", by the girl friends of the bride.

Shortly before the church wedding, the "bewailing of the bride", the counterpart of the groom's farewell banquet, takes place. This is a typical celebration offered by the bride's parents to their daughter and her friends.

In the morning hours the assistants and friends of the two parties gather at their respective houses amidst cheerful banqueting, music and dancing.

When the proper time has arrived the bridegroom signals for the departure, and after the best man has bidden him farewell in the name of the bachelors' corporation, accompanied by his assistants and the gypsy band, he drives over to the bride's house. Admittance there will be granted to him only after protracted negotiations and after the best man has cut through the rope of straw with which the gate has been fastened. This is one of the picturesque remnants of those olden times when the bride was often forcibly abducted. After the admittance of the groom's party, the crying bride once more kisses her parents and her relations, who then hand her over to the custody of the best man. At this moment the band strikes up a merry tune, and the bridal procession, crowded into beribboned carriages, drives to the parish church. After the benediction of their wedding the young couple offer bread and wine to the priest, and in the meantime the younger set performs in the churchyard a dance known as the "dance of the priest".

After the ceremony the two households return to their respective homes, where a rich meal and a variety of drinks are consumed "to the health" of the newly-

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585 weds. This meal is followed by the handing of the wedding-presents to the bride.

All the time messenger after messenger is sent on behalf of the bridegroom urging the bride to get ready for the final departure. As in the morning, the arriving bridegroom is again hindered by a feinted struggle and a prearranged discussion. Finally consent is given, the best man pronounces the bride's farewell, and the deeply veiled, crying bride mounts into the carriage which is to take her to her new home. The carriages are gaily beribboned, the horse and the whip are decorated with coloured cracknel wreaths. In the rear carriage the gypsy band plays tune after tune, and if the trip is long, or if the bridegroom is from another village, at leaving the village boundaries all descend to take part in the so-called "station-dance".

[591] Meanwhile everything has been prepared at the bridegroom's house for the bride's reception. She is greeted on the doorstep by her mother-in-law, who offers her welcome and a lump of sugar with the words: "May your stay in our house be as sweet as this lump of sugar". The womenfolk of her new family throw upon her a handful of wheat, symbol of fertility. Before entering, the bride has to cross the embers of birchwood. This is called the "singeing of the bride" and symbolizes her purification. The bride's request for admittance is followed by a solemn welcome. She is shown into the house and taken to the fireplace, where often a burning torch, the symbol of vigilance, is handed to her. Afterwards she partakes of the first meal with her husband, during which they eat from the same plate and drink from the same glass. Sometimes only the man eats, with the bride standing by. This is a symbol of service and obedience.

A thousand little local customs, the purpose of which

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is to invoke the blessing of Heaven, fill up time before the high-light of the day, the wedding-banquet, begins. 585

The place of honour at the long end of the table facing outwards is occupied by the newly-weds. In front of them the Tree of Life, a fresh bough hung with nuts and apples is erected. Before grace the whole gathering joins in merry songs, many of which refer to the happy occasion. Then grace is said and the banquet begins. The candles on the Tree of Life are lit. The bride takes a fruit from the tree and offers one to the bridegroom. The remaining fruit is handed round to the guests. The plates and jugs containing the foods and drink presented by the guests are offered first, and afterwards the regular courses are taken round. Innumerable courses follow one another from early afternoon until midnight. The newly wed couple eat from the same plate, drink from the same glass, and use the same wooden knife, fork and spoon. Toasts are said by the men in order of their importance; spirits rise, and joking begins, with a multitude of witty improvisations. Meanwhile the gypsies play without interruption until midnight, when the traditional "dance of the cooks" takes place. The women who have assisted the family in preparing the banquet come in from the kitchen dressed as cooks, with the cooking-utensils in their hands. Assisted by the music, they perform their dance, after which a collection, called the "pap money", is made for them. After this dance the guests rise, and before the general dancing begins, the musicians and those who have waited at table are served. The hall is cleared to make room for dancing, which begins with the dance of the bride. She dances a turn with all the male members of her new family which symbolizes her initiation and her acceptance by the clan.

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585 This is the hour at which the bride's family and her relations arrive to join in the celebration.

At a prearranged moment the best man puts out the lights, and to the tune of the "candle-dance", three candles are lit and the bride is handed over to the bride-
[302] groom. He leads her out to the courtyard or to one of the outer rooms, where her hair is "put up" into a knot and her "head is tied in" with the married woman's bonnet. Therewith she is officially admitted to womanhood, and when she returns to the dance it will be as a woman "in her own right". Immediately upon her entry into the room somebody will shout "the bride is for sale!" and then the dance of the bride is on. After they have placed a coin — the price of the bride — on a plate, all men present dance round with her. Those who, on account of age or infirmity, are unable to dance, pay none the less, while the obliging best man dances their turn for them. The last man to dance with her is the bridegroom. He places a large sum of money on the plate already heaped with silver coins (it is the pin-money for the bride), makes a sudden whirl with his bride, and then both rush out of the room. They mount to the loft, where, set on the floor, a table laden with choice foods, a bottle of wine sweetened with honey, and the open bridal bed await them. They taste the food and sip the sweet wine; the bridegroom takes off one of his high boots and, with the words "I am your master", gently touches with it the forehead of his bride. Then together they pull up the ladder leading to the ground floor, and while the bride shyly turns away, the bridegroom slowly closes the door.

Downstairs, meanwhile, the dance and feasting continue. The celebration usually lasts until the break of dawn. In rich families, however, the celebration lasts as long as there is food and wine to serve. Wedding-ban-

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quets of three days or more are not a rarity even today. 585 ●
The parents of the newly-weds usually sit somewhere in the background, often on the clay bench of the immense tiled-stove. The bride's father speaks of the brilliance of the celebration and the success of the feast. The bridegroom's father thereupon remarks modestly: "We are poor but we are living well".

On the floor an exultant youth shouts his overflowing happiness: "We never die!" And feasting, dancing, and the general merriment go on and on until the distant end . . .